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New Czech Minister of Agriculture and Environment

Report Categories:

Agricultural Situation

Agriculture in the News

Agriculture in the Economy

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Report Highlights:

New Czech Minister of Agriculture is Miroslav Toman, who had been Deputy Minister of Agriculture and then President of the Federation of the Food and Drink Industries of the Czech Republic. Former Deputy Minister of Environment, Tomas Jan Podivinsky, is new Minister of Environment. Both will serve in the caretaker government pending the next elections.

General Information:

On July 10 and 11, 2013, Czech President Milos Zeman swore in a new cabinet. The cabinet is lead by new Prime Minister (PM) Jiri Rusnok, Zeman's former Economic Adviser. He took over after PM Petr Necas, who resigned last month amid a corruption and spying scandal. The new cabinet, however, faces opposition from the main parliamentary parties and is not expected to pass upcoming confidence vote.

Agricultural Minister Miroslav Toman holds a strong agricultural background. He graduated from the Czech University of Life Sciences in Prague and started working as livestock specialist on a farm. After having worked in several other agricultural firms and institutions, he was assigned to a diplomatic post in Washington, DC, where he served as Commercial Counselor, from 1996 to 2001.

In 2002, he became Deputy Minister of Agriculture and participated in the EU accession negotiations. In 2006 he left the Ministry, two years after the Czech Republic's joined the EU. In 2007, Toman became President of the Federation of the Food and Drink Industries of the Czech Republic (FFDI), where he acted until becoming Minister of Agriculture a few days ago.

Interesting to mention is Toman's family background, wherein his father, Zdenek Toman, served as Minister of Agriculture from 1981 – 1983 under the then Communist government. As a member of the Communist Party, he served at several high level political positions, including Deputy Prime Minister.

Main priorities Miroslav Toman notes for his ministerial appointment include:

- Finalization of compensation for damages suffered during the recent floods by agricultural and food industry subjects,
- determination of national application of the EU Common Agricultural Policy,
- preparation of the 2014 agricultural budget, and
- support of quality foodstuffs (in the sense of improving general quality of foodstuffs that are sold on the Czech market).

Environmental Minister Tomas Jan Podivinsky graduated from the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Charles University in 1992. In 2004 he became a career diplomat, having graduated from the Diplomatic Academy in Prague. Between 1997 and 2003 he worked at the Czech Embassy in Vienna and was in charge of communication regarding the Czech nuclear power plant in Temelin. After that he held various positions at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including Director of Minister's Office. Between 2005 and 2009 he served as Consul General in Dresden, Germany, dealing with cross border environmental and infrastructural issues. He is a member of the Rotary Club Prague.

Minister Podivinsky is well versed in environmental protection area, as he worked in the State Environmental Fund before he assumed the post at the Ministry of Environment. In 2012 he was appointed Deputy Minister and Director General of Technical Protection of Environment.

He notes his priorities during his tenure will be:

- construction of the 3rd and 4th blocks of the Temelin nuclear power plant that he sees important for the country's energy stability,

- implementation of the New Green Savings program that focuses subsidies for energy saving (e.g. use of renewable sources),
- improvement of air quality in northern Moravia that is polluted by industry, as well as by obsolete household heating systems, and
- absorption of EU funds and preparation for subsidy planning for period 2014 – 2020.